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## New deal for Gibsons Recycling

RECYCLING CONTRACT



Photo submitted

Juan Allard stands beside the recycled glass area at Gibsons Recycling. Gibsons Recycling Depot and the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) have agreed to an 18-month deal valued at \$297,000,

meaning the recovery centre will continue to handle a portion of the SCRDR regional recycling function.

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**BEN INGRAM/STAFF WRITER**

Gibsons Recycling Depot and the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRDR) have agreed to an 18-month deal valued at \$297,000, meaning the recovery centre will continue to handle a portion of the SCRDR regional recycling function.

"This contract is literally an at-cost contract. There's zero fat on the bone," said Buddy Boyd, owner of Gibsons Recycling.

Boyd and the SCRDR had previously been operating on an interim agreement that paid the recycler \$11,500 per month. Their new deal will see that increased by \$5,000, retroactive to July 1.

The SCRDR has budgeted more than \$636,000 for regional recycling this year. The yearly value of the new agreement sits at more than 30 per cent of that amount.

The regional district operated two of its own drop-off locations before Gibsons Recycling took over operations in the Town.

The value of the deal is meant to reflect the SCRDR's portion of recycling in Gibsons. What that portion is worth has remained a mystery to both public officials and the private sector, but Boyd said "they're getting a sickly insane deal.

"They're only paying us for the amount of stuff that was brought to the IGA mall, which means we were already handling 60 per cent of the community recycling," he said. "We handle 100 per cent, but we're only paid for the amount that went to the Gibsons part by the mall."

Gibsons Recycling Depot offers recovery options over and above what the SCRDR has specifically contracted them to provide, including electronic waste and glass.

According to Boyd, the contract also allows the recovery centre to keep deposits on recyclables. But combined with fuel, ferry rates and wages for the now 15-strong staff, "it's mostly a break-even thing.

"We use our own trucks, we have everything, we do it all. We pay for the ferry," Boyd said. "We've been doing this for nine years, can you believe it?"

As the SCRDR moves towards its goal of zero waste, a decision between a public, private or not-for-profit operation — or some mixture therein — will likely depend on the cost.

Gibsons director Gerry Tretick described the new deal as the best temporary solution available while the SCRDR matures its zero waste plans, a process he said should take about a year.

Negotiations between Gibsons Recycling and the SCRDR experienced friction due to a lack of information, but the board wanted to see the service continued without disruption.

"There are a lot of unknowns with regards to that. When we get our permanent plan in place, then it's time to have everything in order," Tretick said, adding that curbside pickup remained a point of uncertainty. "Everybody agrees it's still too soon to really decide."

In the meantime, Boyd has sought to promote the recovery centre model in other communities. The recycler has been working with local sustainability consultants Greenomics to promote the private sector model.

"In addition to pursuing opportunities within Canada and the U.S., we are also presenting the solution to various cities in Africa," said its president, Erich Schwartz.

Schwartz said he felt the contract signalled a brighter day for the Coast's taxpayers, by bringing competition to the field of recycling.

"The reason this model saves taxpayers money is because it is partially paid for by the materials recovered and sold," he said, adding that the materials would normally head to the landfill.

"Because our regional government is also in the landfill business, it causes a conflict of interest in supporting zero-waste goals," he argued.

According to SCRD staff, there is not presently a way of knowing whether or not Gibsons Recycling is being subsidized by taxation under the current arrangement.

The agreement was made "by the seat of our pants," according to Tretick.

But taxpayers shouldn't fret, Boyd argued.

"People are incorrect if they think we're making out like bandits here," he cautioned. "We're not. It's labour intensive and cost expensive to manage discards properly."